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AMERICAN SLAVERY,

AND THE

MEANS OF ITS ABOLITION.

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The substance of the following Essay was delivered, in the form of an Address, at Plymouth, N. H., May 5th, 1840; and is now published by the particular request of those who heard it.

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AMERICAN SLAVERY, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

MORE than forty years ago the writer of the following pages read Wilberforce's publications on the slave trade, in which were described the various methods of procuring the slaves in Africa, the horrors of the "middle passage," and their cruel treatment in the West Indies. In perusing these statements of that great philanthropist and friend of the injured African race, his feelings became, in some measure, enlisted in favor of the colored people of our land, and in opposition to the slavery upheld by our nation.

He was never sensible of feeling the prejudice against color, so often manifested; but, in his intercourse with colored persons, treated them, as he would others. And having them for many years as neighbors, and, not unfrequently, as hired help, they were admitted to eat with the family at the same table.

In 1824 he was invited to attend a political celebration on the 4th of July. In declining the invitation, he noticed the inconsistency of our conduct in celebrating our liberty, founded upon the principle that all men are created free and equal, and proclaiming this "self-evident truth," and yet holding hundreds of thousands of our fellow men in degrading bondage.

The next year, he was requested to preach on the 4th of July. The sermon was, by request, printed. The following extract will show the writer's views respecting American slavery. "Our conduct in relation to the Africans has been most inconsistent, absurd, and criminal. While earnestly contending for the principle, that all men ought to be free and equal, and risking every thing in

opposing the claims of Great Britain to *tax us*, we were, at the same time, holding in abject slavery hundreds of thousands of our fellow beings, who, upon our own principles, had an equal right with ourselves to enjoy the sweets of liberty. How great guilt then has been contracted by enslaving, and holding in bondage, and maltreating the poor negroes. And what efforts ought to be made for their intellectual, moral and religious improvement, and their emancipation, and their enjoyment of the rights of freemen."

Such being the feelings of the writer, he rejoiced to see attention turned to the subject of slavery, and combined efforts making for its removal. And, though he deeply regretted the harshness and severity with which opposers of abolition movements, and even those who did not engage in them, were treated, yet he was willing to countenance the cause of abolition, hoping that this, in his view, very exceptionable manner, would be gradually corrected. But, as it respects many of the Abolitionists, he is sorry to say, his hopes have been disappointed.

Being, therefore, fully persuaded that the course alluded to is injuring the cause both of religion and abolition, he ventures to point out what he believes the word of God teaches to be "a more excellent way." And he will endeavor to do it kindly, and not needlessly to wound the feelings of any, hoping to be guided by that wisdom which is from above, and "is profitable to direct," and which "is pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and is without partiality, and without hypocrisy," and to present the subject as it will appear in the light of the great day. And he requests the reader impartially to weigh what is offered in "the balances of the sanctuary," and to regard it so far only as it corresponds with the teachings of the divine oracles.

THE CHARACTER OF AMERICAN SLAVERY.

The subject of American slavery, if rightly considered, must be to every Christian, and every true patriot, a deeply interesting and painful subject. That our country—which solemnly declared before God and the world, that

it is "self-evident" that "all men are created equal, and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and which claims to be the freest on earth, and the asylum of the oppressed—should, nevertheless, hold in abject bondage millions of its own people, is a deep stain on our national character. The holding of these unoffending fellow beings under the rod of oppression is a great political and moral evil. It is a flagrant violation of our professed principles of equal rights, and manifestly inconsistent with the principles of our holy religion. No one would be willing to be a slave himself, and, therefore, if he loved others as himself, or was willing to do to others as he would have others do to him, he could not hold others in involuntary slavery.

Slaves are held as *property*, at the disposal of their master, and possess, strictly speaking, no legal rights, civil or religious, and, if ever so much abused, can seek no redress in any court of justice. They are in a great measure kept without the means of intellectual, moral and spiritual improvement. And by sale and the removal of the purchased slaves to a distant part of the country, the most endearing ties are liable continually to be severed, and the nearest relatives, husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters, to be torn from each other, and for ever separated.

But the greatest of the evils of American slavery is the depriving of its victims of the Bible and of the means of religion. Some slaves do indeed attend public worship, and receive oral instruction. Some masters also impart to their slaves religious instruction. And a few are able to read. But, if I am rightly informed, teaching them to read is penal in all the slave States, except Kentucky, and those who do it are liable to punishment by fine or imprisonment, or both. Consequently, they are effectually prevented from reading "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And many, according to the testimony of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, "are in the condition of heathen."

And though not much, comparatively, seems to be now said on this subject by many advocates for emancipation, yet, what is the political bondage, and all the other evils

of slavery, compared with this? What is all the temporal happiness, which can be enjoyed, compared with the salvation of the soul, or eternal blessedness? And are all the deprivations and misery, which can be endured in this short life, comparable with eternal misery? "The sufferings of this present time," however great, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" in saints, or with that "everlasting punishment" which will be the portion of those who are "lost."

Those means, therefore, which are necessary to secure the salvation of the soul, ought to be esteemed more highly, and sought with far more earnestness for ourselves and others, than any mere temporal privileges, advantages and blessings; and to deprive the slaves of these means of salvation is the worst feature in the slave system, and incurs the deepest guilt. And when such is the system, it requires no arguments to prove, that it ought to be immediately abolished.

Indeed many at the South have most explicitly condemned slavery, and urged the necessity of its abolition. Mr. Jefferson, speaking of slavery, said, "It destroys the morals of one part of the nation, and the *amor patria* (love of country) of the other. With the morals of the people, their industry is also destroyed. And can the liberties of a nation be secure, when we have removed their only basis—a conviction in the minds of the people, that these liberties are the gift of God? that they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep for ever. The Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest;" i. e. with the slaves. Patrick Henry said, "It is as repugnant to humanity, as it is inconsistent with the Bible, and destructive to liberty." William Pinckney of Maryland said, "Its continuance is as shameful as its origin."

In 1818, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church *unanimously* adopted a report on slavery, in which they say, "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires

us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel, which enjoins, that all things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we should do even so to them. Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable and immortal beings in such circumstances, as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endearments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity.

“Such are some of the consequences of slavery—consequences not imaginary, but which connect themselves with its very existence.”

And they say further, “It is manifestly the duty of all Christians, who enjoy the light of the present day—when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged—to use their honest, earnest and unwearied endeavors, as speedily as possible, to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and, if possible, throughout the world.”

Freedom is the right of the slave. And it is the duty of the master to grant it, and to grant it immediately.

And, that emancipation is safe, and would be for the interest of slaveholders, might be easily shown, and is clearly proved by the result of the experiment in the West Indies. Free labor is manifestly more profitable than slave labor. The African race possess kind, and generous and grateful feelings; and if treated with humanity and kindness, would labor much more faithfully as freemen for wages, than as slaves under the cruel stimulus of the whip. And if emancipated, there would be no fear of insurrection, or of the slaughter of the whites. And the States, now feeling the withering influence of slavery, would be much better cultivated and far more prosperous.

Though the result of the emancipation in the British West India Islands has been, by some writers and papers, represented as unfavorable, yet, according to the most authentic accounts, it has been successful. And when difficulties have occurred, as has sometimes been the case, they have been owing to the stupidity, or ill conduct of the planters.

The Rev. John Scoble of London—who had spent the greater part of the last three years in the British West Indies, as an agent of the British Anti-Slavery Society—at a meeting held in Boston, August 22, 1839, gave a most interesting exposition of the results of the emancipation of the slaves in these colonies, in answer to questions proposed to him. A few extracts from his statements will be given, taken from the Essex Register.

“From all which he had heard and seen, he was satisfied the experiment of *complete emancipation* had worked well for the owners of the estates; and the prosperity of the colonies would be greatly increased by it. Landed property, he said, had increased in value in Barbadoes from 25 to 40 per cent. in some districts—and generally in the colonies, from 5 to 25 per cent.”

“There had,” he said, “been a great improvement in the domestic condition of the laborers—they enjoyed more comforts—their huts, or rather *hovels*, which they formerly occupied, were giving place to more comfortable habitations—they were not willing to wear the poor and cheap clothes which their masters formerly furnished for them—many of the women, instead of toiling in the fields, were now devoted to household duties; and many children, who formerly had been compelled to work in the fields, were now sent to school.

“Enquiries were made of Mr. Scoble, as to the willingness of the blacks to labor for fair wages—as to the state of morals and religion among them—how the aged and infirm poor were supported among them, &c.; to all which Mr. S. gave the most satisfactory answers. In regard to the state of *morals*, he said, crime had decreased since the emancipation—and he stated many interesting facts in regard to the number of persons confined in prisons in several colonies at his visits in 1836, compared with the number in 1838. The number is now *only about*

half as large as in former years, and most of the offences of the negroes were misdemeanors, petty thefts," &c.

Similar testimony is furnished in a letter, published in the New York Journal of Commerce, from Mr. Gurney, an English Quaker gentleman, who has lately visited some of the Windward Islands.

He says, "*Landed property has risen, and is still rising in value*—being decidedly of greater value now than it was six years ago. In Antigua it seems to be a clear point, that the property *without* the slaves, is now of equal value with the property *and* the slaves, six years ago, or before emancipation.

"A similar remark applies with still greater force to St. Kitts. R. Claxton, the Solicitor General there, told me that he would not take £6,000 now for a property which cost him only £2,000 six years ago. Indeed, many planters spoke of what they receive in the shape of compensation, as quite a gratuity.

"The unfavorable reports which have been spread of the working of freedom, have generally arisen from persons who are anxious to lay hold of landed property at a cheap rate. A clear proof that all is doing well, is unintentionally given by a gentleman in Antigua, who cries down the system, as having ruined the West Indies, while he strives to purchase all the landed property he can.

"The *comforts* of the negroes are immensely increased. They are providing themselves with good food and clothing. The evidence of this fact is abundant in every island which we visited. No proof of it can be stronger than the almost doubling of the imports within the last two years. On the whole there cannot be the shadow of doubt that the substantial property of the colonies which we visited is on the increase."

MEANS FOR ABOLISHING SLAVERY.

I shall now inquire how slavery may be abolished in our land. This is the most difficult part of the subject; and on which I imagine there is, in reality, a great diversity of opinion, even among abolitionists.

There are three ways, and three only, in which it is

contemplated that it can be removed; by insurrection—the action of Congress—or the action of the slave States. Probably all would deprecate an attempt on the part of the slaves to obtain their liberty by insurrection. This, if ultimately successful, would be attended with much bloodshed and misery, and a vast loss of life, both of the colored people and of the whites.

Some suppose, that Congress have power to abolish slavery in the slave States. They have undoubtedly power to abolish it in the District of Columbia, and in the Territories. And the constitution might be so amended as to give Congress power to abolish slavery within the States where it exists. But, as it now stands, it appears to me that it does not give Congress any such power. Whatever may be said, and though the constitution does not name slaves or slavery, it manifestly sanctions it.

Among other provisions, that respecting representation in Congress is conclusive, where “*three-fifths of all other persons*,” besides citizens—who are to be reckoned in apportioning the number of representatives—can only mean slaves. And when the constitution went into operation, while the framers were alive and among the leading politicians of the day, the representatives were chosen in this proportion in the slave States; and have always continued to be thus chosen.

And Congress were forbidden by the constitution to prohibit the foreign *slave trade* within twenty years. And when these twenty years were expired, Congress immediately passed laws to put a stop to this trade. But, how absurd to suppose that the constitution forbid Congress to abolish the *slave trade* within twenty years, and yet, gave that body power to abolish *slavery itself* immediately!

But it is pleaded, that this power is given to Congress in the fifth article of the amendments, where it is said, “No person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.” And does this refer to slaves? Manifestly not. Can persons be *deprived* of that which they do not possess? To deprive a person of something, implies that he *possessed* it. And do slaves possess liberty, or property? And can they be

deprived of property, when they have none? And would an article have been adopted by Congress and the States, so manifestly contrary to other parts of the constitution? But it is said, that the most liberal construction ought to be given to the clause in favor of liberty. True, when there can be any reasonable doubt as to the real meaning of a constitution or law. But where the meaning is *plain*, there is no room for *construction*.

And when we have substantial and efficient weapons enough, it is not good policy to seize those which are feeble, and which may be wrested from us, and turned against us.

But, if slavery must be abolished by the action of the slave States, then it is an important question—How can they be brought to put forth this action? This they will not do till they are convinced that their duty, their interest, or their safety, *or all these*, demand the emancipation of their slaves. It is evident then, that *arguments* must bring them to the adoption of this measure. These may be addressed to their reason, their conscience, their interest and their fears; and more especially, to the two former.*

But by whom, and in what manner, must these arguments be addressed to them? Are there those among themselves, who will do this work, and labor effectually to convince the people of the slaveholding States, that they ought immediately to “break every yoke?”

As there is so much in those States from self-interest, education, long cherished habits, and familiarity with slavery, to lessen the evil in the public estimation, and counteract the efforts and influence of those who might desire its abolition, an external force from the free States is necessary to bear upon this fearful evil. And that this force may be powerful and effectual, it must be *combined* and *general*. It must be a *united* testimony against slavery.

* These were manifestly the views of those who formed the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. For in the second article of the constitution, they say of the Society, “It shall aim to convince all our fellow citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences, that slavery is a heinous sin in the sight of God,” &c.

How then can this union in sentiment and action be secured? Those who attempt to secure this object need to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Meekness, prudence and decision are all highly necessary. The more difficult the object to be attained, the more needful are wisdom, prudence and firmness. A fiery zeal not tempered with meekness may do much injury, by irritating those whom we would wish to gain, and exciting in them prejudice, and thus repelling them instead of gaining them. And there is great danger of this.

Abolitionists have dwelt so much upon the horrors of slavery, and seen the sufferings of the slaves, and the cruelties inflicted upon them so often depicted in lively colors, that their feelings have been deeply enlisted in behalf of these degraded and suffering fellow beings. And if others do not appear to feel for them as they do, they are in danger of indulging wrong feelings towards them, and condemning them with great severity. And when their sympathy is so strongly excited, they are liable to be swayed entirely by it, and not duly to regard the sober dictates of reason, or the precepts of the Bible.

Some seem to be so absorbed in this subject, as to regard every other evil, and every other enterprise, of comparatively small concernment; and appear to feel, that, if this evil be removed from our land, the judgments of Heaven must be averted, and we shall enjoy prosperity; and that all ought, therefore, to be mainly concerned for the removal of this one great evil. Hence some of this class, who were professors of religion, appear to have lost, in a great measure, their interest in the cause of Christ. And I fear that many have, in this way, suffered in their religious feelings.

Some have said, that abolitionism is Christianity, and that abolitionists are Christians. But this is setting up a standard of Christian character, manifestly not warranted by the holy Scriptures, and is crying peace to many, to whom God has said "there is no peace." Wicked men do not become good men by becoming abolitionists. And it must be dangerous to their immortal interests, and provoking to God,*to flatter them that, because they are engaged in the abolition enterprise, they are Christians,

or are doing God an acceptable service, while they are in heart his enemies, and are in rebellion against him. And yet, some professing Christians appear to have a more cordial union with such, than with others who are not united with them in this enterprise, though engaged in other benevolent enterprises, and in the cause of Christ, and appear to be devoted Christians. But is this right? And will it meet the approbation of the God of heaven? If they themselves neglect other benevolent enterprises, should they not "cast the beam out of their own eye" before they attempt to "pull the mote out of their brother's eye?"

We should, as far as possible, estimate every *cause*, and every *interest*, as *God* estimates them. And there are other very great and crying sins in our land beside slaveholding. Sabbath breaking, neglect and contempt of divine institutions and of the authority of God, disregard of the divine oracles, infidelity, licentiousness, intemperance, selfishness, supreme devotedness to the world, and our treatment of the Indian tribes, are all crying sins of our land. And should slavery be abolished, I should have no hope that the judgments of Heaven would be averted without a general reformation: this all ought to endeavor to promote, and to set themselves against *all* these evils, and to help remove them, so far as their influence can reach.

All Christians should duly estimate, and engage in the support of every benevolent enterprise. But some zealous abolitionists take little interest in these enterprises, and especially in the missionary cause; and not unfrequently have articles and observations been published, which were calculated to discredit it in the minds of the community.

But is not the cause of missions far more important than the cause of abolition in our land? What is the emancipation of *three millions*, compared with the civilization and christianizing of *SIX HUNDRED MILLIONS*, multitudes of whom are equally or more degraded than the slaves of the South?

Let Christian abolitionists, therefore, especially, feel the importance of meeting *all* their responsibilities, as they must answer it to God in the great day, and not

withdraw their support from, or throw obstacles in the way of any good cause, but afford it their cordial countenance and coöperation. In this way they will recommend their principles to others. And let them cultivate deep piety and deep humility, and "in lowliness of mind esteem others better than themselves." And then they will not be so ready to condemn others with severity, as has been a too common practice, and by which the cause has been, I am fully persuaded, greatly injured and retarded.

Denunciation, or heaping upon others opprobrious epithets, or bringing against them charges which they believe to be unjust, is not the way to convince or gain them. No person of any consideration would treat a friend thus, whom he considered in fault, and whom he wished to convince and reclaim.

And are the public attacks, which are so often made upon ministers and churches, calculated to subserve the cause of religion or of abolition? And have those who make them, seriously inquired, and satisfied their own minds, that such charges will meet the approbation of God? Though the churches are not so pure, nor the ministers so devoted as they ought to be; yet it may be doubted whether there are purer churches, or more devoted ministers in any other country. In the time of Isaiah, God's ancient church was doubtless less pure than are our churches; and yet God said to her, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye"—and "every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

Some abolitionists have appeared disposed to condemn all ministers and professing Christians, who did not act with them, as "pro-slavery," and unworthy of confidence. Though I have no doubt many abolitionists have disapproved of such a course, yet I have seen little disapproval of it expressed. Perhaps they thought it would injure the cause to censure those who were engaged in it, and would not be *expedient*. But that "wisdom, which is without *partiality*," will lead us to condemn what is wrong in *friends*, as well as others. Such an impartial course is, I believe, the way to secure the divine approbation and blessing. As I am a professed

abolitionist,* and, as remarks have been made, and resolutions passed at abolition meetings, which will apply to ministers much better than myself, representing them as unworthy of support, I cannot feel it to be right to pass such things in silence. Whatever be their design, they are calculated to destroy the influence of ministers, and to *destroy souls*. For, let the impenitent hearers of such ministers believe these representations, and their preaching will do them no good. Probably when making these remarks, and passing these resolutions, the authors thought they were doing right; but perhaps on sober reflection, and in their *closets*, away from excitement, those who are Christians will feel differently, and be convinced that a more conciliatory course would be better. Hoping that this may be the effect, I here set down a few of the things to which I have alluded.

The editor of "The Liberator" published the following declaration :

"Christianity indignantly rejects the sanctimonious pretensions of the great mass of the clergy in this land. It is becoming more and more apparent, that they are nothing better than hirelings, in the bad sense of the term, that they are blind leaders of the blind, spiritual popes, dumb dogs that cannot bark, that they love the fleece better than the flock. Their overthrow is registered in the scroll of destiny."

At the meeting of the Grafton County Anti-Slavery Society, holden at Littleton, N. H. January 29th and 30th, 1840, the following resolutions were passed, though not without opposition :

"*Resolved*, That the slave system of this country derives its chief and essential support from the nominally free States; and that the citizens of New Hampshire are as deeply implicated in the guilt of slaveholding as those of any other State in the Union.

"*Resolved*, That the only way in which the citizens of New Hampshire can exculpate themselves from the guilt of slaveholding, is to countenance and support the Anti-slavery enterprise."

Here it is asserted, that the citizens of New Hampshire are as deeply implicated in the guilt of slaveholding as those of any of the slave States; and that the *only way* in which they can exculpate themselves from this guilt, "is to countenance and support the Anti-slavery enter-

* I am a member of the New Hampshire State Anti-Slavery Society.

prise." As the guilt of all sin must be removed in the same way—and this is said to be the only way to remove this guilt—it would seem, that all who "countenance and support the Anti-slavery enterprise" are exculpated from the guilt of *all their sins*, as they cannot be exculpated from the guilt of *one sin*, and not of *all sin*.

I presume that those who adopted this resolution did not reflect, that it would lead to such a conclusion. They probably thought, that the citizens of New Hampshire could not give evidence of sincere repentance, unless they should "countenance and support the Anti-slavery enterprise." But if this is their *only way* to afford such evidence, and to be exculpated from this guilt, do not all who "countenance and support the Anti-slavery enterprise" afford such evidence, and thus show that they are exculpated from the guilt of this sin, and consequently, from the guilt of *all sin*?

At the annual meeting of the Merrimack County Anti-Slavery Society, January 14th, 1840, the following resolutions were adopted:

"*Resolved*, That the abolition enterprise is the cause of God, and that those professed ministers of the gospel who treat it with opposition or indifference, are recreant to their high trust as ambassadors of Christ—hypocritical in their professions of love to man, and are unworthy the confidence and support of a Christian community.

"*Resolved*, That all those who support professed ministers of the gospel who refuse to wield their pulpit influence against the diabolical system of American slavery, are guilty of supporting that system."

At a meeting of "a number of the friends of the slave, from different parts of the State," at Concord, January 22d—the day after the meeting of the Convention of Congregational and Presbyterian Ministers and Churches—the following resolution, among others, was adopted:

"*Resolved*, That at the present stage of the Anti-slavery enterprise, those ministers professing to be the ministers of Christ, who do not fearlessly and boldly advocate the immediate and unconditional emancipation of the slaves of this country, are unworthy the countenance or support of the Christian community."

These and similar resolutions which have been passed in other places, doubtless refer to all ministers who do not openly join with abolitionists, and thus "countenance and support the Anti-slavery enterprise."

Are such attacks calculated to do ministers good, or to promote the cause of Christ, or the cause of abolition? Though we are commanded to "bless those that curse us," yet even good men do not like to be reproached, and will not be pleased with those who assail them with opprobrious language. Especially, if instead of being treated according to the direction of the Saviour in the 18th of Matthew they are *publicly assailed*, they will be very liable to be irritated. And, if by such attacks any cause them to sin, they will be guilty themselves. And, if they duly considered what a dreadful thing even the least sin is, as committed against an infinite and holy God, they would dread to commit it themselves, or to lead others into it.

Though David was a good man, the irritating language and conduct of Nabal so provoked him, that, had it not been for the prudent and mild conduct of Abigail, he would have destroyed the whole family.

Rehoboam lost a great part of his kingdom by forsaking the counsel of the old men who stood before Solomon his father, who advised him to "speak good words to the people," and following the counsel of the young men, and "answering the people roughly."

Such conduct in abolitionists is inconsistent with their own professed principles—with the spirit and precepts of the gospel—with the counsel of wise and good men—and with the teachings of experience.

The great principles upon which they rest their plea for the slave, are—that we ought to love others as ourselves, and do to others as we would have them do to us. But would *they* be willing to have others thus publicly assail *their* character. When thus assailed, they show plainly that they would not. If, therefore, they loved others as themselves, they could not do thus.

A man's *character* is dearer to him than *property*. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

———"Who steals my purse
Steals trash——
But he who filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
But makes me poor indeed."

Should some persons injure the property, or cast filth upon

the clothes of one who was the object of their dislike, every one would condemn such conduct as becoming only a mob. And yet it is a far greater injury to have the character vilified and reproached.

Some justify such language from the denunciations of the Saviour against the Scribes and Pharisees, and his calling them hypocrites. But when any can, like the Saviour, know the hearts of others, and know to whom to apply such epithets, then they may use them. And they may take the lash, and compel others to do what they think they ought to do, and plead the example of Christ, who, with a scourge, drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple.

A good cause does not need such weapons to support it, and will only be injured by their use. And when any resort to them, they will be suspected of being conscious of the weakness of their cause, or of being under the influence of a wrong spirit. When a person is conscious that he is strong in *argument*, he will feel no need of such base weapons, and will not use them, if he is in the exercise of a right spirit.* For it is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and to the instructions of the Bible. The spirit of the gospel is a meek, kind, benevolent spirit, and undissembled goodwill to all. And, if in full exercise, men would love others as themselves; "and love worketh no ill to his neighbor." But to pursue a course which directly tends to injure the character, and to destroy the peace and usefulness of a good man, is working the greatest evil to him, and is contrary to the instructions of the Bible, and the way there pointed out to convince and gain others: "A soft tongue breaketh the bone." This we are here taught will have the greatest effect. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." This is most explicit,

* Though we are commanded "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," yet the unkind and censorious spirit, and harsh language often displayed in theological disputes, has excited great prejudice, and led many to condemn *all* religious controversy.

and teaches, that, if we would gain others, we must be gentle towards *all* men without any exception, in meekness instructing them. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law," by practically condemning the law for prohibiting such evil speaking.

"Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." This is a most solemn declaration. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way;" which he would do by harshly judging and condemning, and thus irritating him. "I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing *all meekness unto all men.*"

What a picture St. James gives of the terrible effects of an unbridled tongue. And an unbridled *pen* is more dangerous. "The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings—be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing." Jude says, that even "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

It is therefore extremely manifest, that evil-speaking, or assailing the character of brethren in the ministry, or in the church, or even others—except by kind and faithful reproof, for evident faults—is contrary to the instructions of the word of God, and is wrong. The Bible allows us to reprove others plainly for their sins, with meekness, and in love, but not with harshness, or opprobrious language.

And this is agreeable to the counsel of the wisest and best of men.

Mr. Adam, an eminently pious minister in England, who died in 1784, in his “Thoughts on Religion,” says, “We should study only the good of others, let them do what they will to us. If I aim at the real spiritual improvement of those I converse with, I shall never say any thing to irritate or vex them, but keep a constant guard on myself. Speaking evil of others at all, unless it be to prevent mischief to religion, or our neighbor, proceeds from pride. Say all the good you can of all; but if you would have ill spoken of any, turn that office to the devil.”

Cudworth said, “*Truth* and *love* are two of the most powerful things in the world, and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of truth, and the silken cords of love twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet violence, whether they will or no.”

“Certainly,” says Bishop Hall, “God abides none but charitable dissensions; those that are well grounded and well governed; grounded upon just causes, and governed with Christian charity and wise moderation; those whose beginning is equity, and end is peace. If we must differ, let these be the conditions; let every one of God’s ministers be ambitious of that praise which Gregory Nazianzen gave to Athanasius; to be an adamant to them that strike him, and a loadstone to them that dissent from him; the one not to be moved with wrong, the other to draw those hearts which disagree. So the fruit of righteousness shall be sown in peace of them that make peace. So the God of peace shall have glory, the church of God rest, and our souls, unspeakable joy and consolation in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus.”

“It is,” says a respectable writer, “impossible to entertain sentiments of true friendship, towards those whom we

are in the practice of maligning every day." Milner, in his Church History, says, "Satire and invective are plants of rapid growth in the malignant soil of human nature."

Rev. Mr. Jenkins, in his remarks on the Report submitted to the Senate of the United States, on the petitions presented to Congress, praying that the mails might not be transmitted through the country on the Sabbath, says, "They who are honestly concerned to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, can cherish no other than sentiments of heart-felt kindness towards the author of this report. Their disagreement with him on a subject of such vital and enduring interest, would prove it the offspring of some of the very lowest principles which govern human conduct, were it to lead them to return railing for railing."

Some attempt to justify harsh language from the example of Luther. But besides the change in the times and the style of controversy, it ought to be recollected that Luther himself *condemned* what they adduce as a *justification* for the use of such language. "In my books of a polemical nature," said he, "I avow, that I have been more violent and bitter than suits my religion and my robe."

The distinguished Christian poet, Cowper, in a letter to Rev. John Newton, said, "No man was ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is—and because it is so—grows angry if it be not treated with some management and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will perhaps bear to be poked, though he will growl even under that operation, but if you touch him roughly, he will bite. There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own; and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by the comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not convicted. He has given it to them soundly, and if they do not tremble and confess that God is in them of a truth, he gives them up as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost forever. But the man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me,

and endeavor calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify a conduct which only proves that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him, if he were not himself deluded."

Ministers undoubtedly sometimes greatly injure their usefulness by their harshness of expression, and the want of a kind and conciliatory address. The abolition enterprise is often said to be "the cause of God," and a "holy cause." If so, it ought surely to be defended and sustained by "spiritual," and not "carnal weapons." And some of the advocates of the cause deeply feel this. William Ladd, the distinguished Advocate of Peace, in a letter addressed some months since to an Anti-slavery Meeting in Portsmouth, which he was invited to attend, says, "If I were present among you, I should say—let every thing be done in LOVE, not only to the poor down-trodden slave, but to his oppressor, and to the slaves of prejudice, 'forbearing threatening.' The chains of the slave may be melted off by the fire of love, but they cannot be severed by the sledge hammer of violence."

Many abolitionists, instead of manifesting the meek, mild and forbearing spirit of Him who, "when he was reviled reviled not again," have too often displayed the spirit of party politicians. But even some of the politicians of the day seem to be convinced of the impropriety of treating opponents with rudeness. After the close of a four weeks' session of the Legislature of Rhode Island, in 1838, it was said, "Not an angry or offensive personality has been uttered by any member."

At an editorial convention held last season at Columbus, Ohio, the following resolutions were passed :

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention, there is one plain standard of editorial propriety from which no man ought to depart, i. e. nothing should be esteemed justifiable in editorial intercourse, which would be clearly condemned in the intercourse of private gentlemen. And, therefore

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention, in all editorial

discussions concerning politics and other subjects of public disputation, all opprobrious epithets, offensive personal allusions, and harsh attacks on private reputation, ought to be carefully avoided.

These testimonies are surely amply sufficient to show the impropriety of the course which I have disapproved, in the estimation of respectable, and wise, and good men. But I will add one more.

Said an eminent missionary among the heathen, "Until a minister feels as our Saviour did on his last return to Jerusalem, when he wept as he said, 'O that thou hadst known,' &c., he is not in a fit state of mind to repeat a single denunciation from his master's lips."

Is not this the spirit which we all need? And were this spirit generally possessed by professing Christians, and Christian ministers, how much of that "wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God," and contention and unchristian feeling, and attacks on each others' reputation would be prevented; and how rapidly would the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of benevolence advance. The weapons of truth and love would then be wielded with mighty power, and with astonishing success.

Even slaveholders would hardly be able to resist such powerful weapons. Mr. Chester, editor of the *Christian Journal* at New York, speaking of Rev. John Rankin, a distinguished abolitionist, says, "He was born, educated, and brought into the ministry in Tennessee, and has been an abolitionist, I might perhaps say, from his birth. Twenty, or twenty-five years ago he was a member of an Abolition Society in that State. His abolition principles and feelings never lead him to indulge in bitterness towards slaveholders, or opponents of any kind. And such is his kindness, such the deep tone of his feeling, that few slaveholders—though often pressed with the most earnest appeals—have ever parted with him but with increased respect."

Last year there was published an account of the visit of a minister of the Quaker denomination to a slave-trader in Virginia, given by the visiter himself, which strikingly illustrates the influence of faithful, but kind remonstrance. Being accompanied to his house by a friend, he says, "I found he was considered, independent of his employment, of a ferocious disposition. His countenance looked fierce. I offered him my hand, feeling nothing in my heart but

love towards him as a man. I endeavored in a tender, feeling, but decided manner to open the subject that brought me to his house, telling him I came in behalf of the poor colored people. I requested him to pause for a moment, and endeavor as much as possible to place his own parents and nearest relatives in the very situation of those poor slaves he had at times purchased and sold again, thereby separating the nearest connections far from each other. He appeared to hear me patiently, and tried to justify his conduct, but with coolness and deliberation. But in time he cast away all his weapons of defence. He gave it as his opinion that before twenty years were passed away, slavery would be brought to a final close, if the work was rightly gone about. He assured us of his determination to quit his business, and acknowledged the gratitude he felt for the visit ; and took his leave of us in an affectionate manner." I have given only a very brief sketch of this interesting visit, as published in the 'Herald of Freedom.'

If this were the spirit generally displayed, and this the course pursued even by professors of religion among abolitionists, how long would it be before they would be joined by the great mass of the people in the free States, and by many in the slave States ? But so much of a contrary spirit has been manifested, and such a different course pursued, that it has produced irritation, and excited prejudice in the minds of very many who would otherwise have cordially united in efforts for the removal of slavery.

It was stated in the 'Herald of Freedom,' that emancipation was universally popular in New York in 1827. And the same feeling, I presume, then pervaded New England generally.

Though Wilberforce in his zealous, and untiring, and finally successful efforts to abolish the slave-trade, manifested the spirit which I have here recommended, yet others who were engaged with him, manifested a different spirit, and pursued a different course, which tended to embarrass this great philanthropist, and to retard the progress of the cause in which he was engaged.

"The contest," says his biographer, "in behalf of abolition, was throughout conducted by Mr. Wilberforce in a spirit of conciliation towards the supporters of the

trade. Some amongst the West Indian body were his personal friends, and of all 'we should not forget,' he writes to Dr. Currie, 'that Christian candor is due to those who carry it on. There may be, I doubt not, amongst them, many men of enlarged and humane minds. I trust that you have done me the justice to acquit me of having adopted any such indiscriminate and false judgment as that you oppose.' "

His prospect of speedy success seemed to be encouraging. "The sympathy of the country was too much aroused to be patient of delay. Public meetings, and petitions numerously signed, multiplied both in England and Scotland." But the levelling principles of the French revolution began to spread and were favored by many abolitionists, which excited great prejudice against their cause. "You will see Clarkson," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster; "caution him against talking of the French revolution, it will be ruin to our cause." "Clarkson," writes Dr. Milner, "will tell you that he had a long conversation with me. I wish him better health, and better notions in politics; no government can stand on such principles as he appeals to, and maintains. I am very sorry for it, because I see plainly, advantage is taken of such cases as his, in order to represent the friends of abolition as levellers. This is not the only instance where the converse of a proposition does not hold; levellers certainly are friends of abolition.' Great mischief had then already risen to the cause. 'What business had your friend Clarkson,' asked Dundas 'to attend the Crown and Anchor last Thursday? He could not have done a more mischievous thing to the cause you have taken in hand.'

"The seed which had been so freely scattered by the revolutionary politics of some leading abolitionists had sprung up into a plentiful harvest of suspicion. 'People connect,' writes Mr. Clark, 'democratical principles with the abolition of the slave trade, and will not hear it mentioned.' "

On this reverse, Mr. Wilberforce made the following reflections, displaying a humility worthy the imitation of every abolitionist, and of every Christian:—"Oh, may not this have been because one so unworthy as I undertook

this hallowed cause, (Uzzah and the ark,) and carried it on with so little true humility, faith, self-abasement, and confidence in God through Christ? No principles but the principles of the gospel should be connected with the abolition of slavery. And if we would expect the blessing of God upon this enterprise, it must be conducted in the spirit of his gospel, and in conformity to the precepts of his word. And without his blessing we shall labor in vain." *

And is a dependence on God's aid and blessing duly felt? If thus felt, it will lead to the cultivation and exemplification of a right spirit—the spirit not merely of humanity, or sympathy, or party zeal, but of real vital piety, which will seek supremely the glory of God, the honor and permanency of his institutions, the advancement of his cause in the world, and the disenthralment and salvation of those around us, who are slaves to sin, and in bondage to Satan; and the conversion of the benighted heathen, as well as the emancipation and elevation of the slaves of our own beloved country. And then the car of liberty, and the chariot of the gospel will move on with majestic and mighty power.

* Life of Wilberforce, pp. 112, 113, 111, 110, 126, 130.





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